



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

LYNDO TIPPETT
SECRETARY

Release: IMMEDIATE

Contact: Public Information Office, (919) 733-2522

Release No.: 604

Date: December 17, 2004

Distribution: NC

NCDOT OPENS STATE'S FIRST HOV LANES

I-77 High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes to Ease Congestion in Charlotte

RALEIGH – The N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) today opened the state's first high occupancy vehicle lanes (HOV) along North I-77 in Charlotte.

Transportation Secretary Lyndo Tippet and Board of Transportation member Marion Cowell joined Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory and Chair of the Metropolitan Transit Commission and other local officials during a ceremony this morning at Charlotte Area Transit System's (CATS) Huntersville Park and Ride Lot to mark the opening of the lanes. The ceremony was followed by a special corridor tour where officials commemorated the opening of the lanes by driving through a special banner.

"The I-77 HOV lanes are part of NCDOT's comprehensive vision to improve mobility in the Charlotte area," said Transportation Secretary Lyndo Tippet. "While motorists who choose to carpool, vanpool or ride CATS will benefit the most by enjoying a more reliable commute time, and by reducing the total number of cars on the highway, the HOV lanes will reduce congestion for all I-77 drivers and allow for future traffic growth."

"The Charlotte region will benefit greatly from this innovative transportation option that provides commuters alternatives to congestion and pollution," said Mayor Pat McCrory. "These HOV lanes provide a balanced transportation system that leverages the public investments in roads and transit."

I-77's southbound HOV lane will run 10 miles from the future I-485 interchange to south of the Brookshire Freeway and features a bypass that will allow HOV travelers to avoid the heavily-congested I-77/I-85 interchange. The northbound lane will run five miles from I-85 to the future I-485 interchange.

MAILING ADDRESS:

NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
CUSTOMER SERVICE
1503 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH NC 27699-1503

TELEPHONE: 1-877-368-4968

FAX: 919-733-9980

WEBSITE: WWW.DOT.STATE.NC.US

LOCATION:

TRANSPORTATION BUILDING
1 SOUTH WILMINGTON STREET
RALEIGH NC

-more-

The purpose of HOV lanes is to move more people with fewer vehicles through carpooling, vanpooling and bus ridership. The I-77 HOV lanes are designated as HOV 2+, meaning that a vehicle qualifies as an HOV if it contains two or more occupants. Busses, vans and motorcycles may also use the lanes.

HOV lanes can carry the same number of people as a general-purpose lane in half the number of cars, even if only two people ride in the vehicle. Additionally, transit buses can carry many more people than carpools and therefore greatly increase the capacity of the HOV lane. In comparison to general-purpose lanes which can be congested during peak times, HOV lanes can carry three times as many people and move traffic freely.

The lanes are distinguished from general-purpose lanes by a diamond symbol and double lined pavement markings, and will be open to HOV's 24-hours a day, seven days a week. Motorists violating HOV restrictions are subject to a \$100 penalty and two points on their drivers license plus court costs. Local and state law enforcement agencies will actively enforce HOV restrictions.

These lanes are the first phase of an I-77 HOV system that will eventually stretch over 23 miles from I-485 near Huntersville to the South Carolina state line. A study is currently being conducted to determine the possible use of HOV lanes on I-40 in the Triangle area.

For more information on I-77's HOV lanes, visit www.ncdot.org/hov. Motorists may also receive updated travel information 24-hours a day by dialing 511, North Carolina's travel information line.

See attached fact sheet for more information.

NCDOT